

## BOOK REVIEW

**Venereal Diseases. A Survey of Existing Legislation.** 1956. Published in English and French. Pp. 44. W.H.O., Geneva. (2 Swiss Fr., 3s. 6d., \$0.70). Sales Agent for U.K.: Director of Publications (Agency Section), H.M. Stationery Office, P.O. Box 569, London, S.E.1.

This is a most valuable work of reference for which all who are interested in preventing the spread of venereal diseases should be grateful to the World Health Organization. It reviews the legislation to prevent the spread of venereal diseases which has been enacted in 44 countries. If anyone is surprised that, *politically*, the old League of Nations achieved so little unanimity of action by its members or is hopeful that its successor, the United Nations, will ever achieve more politically, he should read this book and ponder on the variety of methods which have been adopted by these 44 nations for the achievement of only one apparently simple aim. They range from the provision of free treatment with prohibition of treatment by unregistered practitioners, as in England and Wales (Scotland is not mentioned), to compulsory examination and treatment of contacts and the sexually promiscuous, as in a number of other countries.

In the introduction the author reminds his readers that (contrary to a common feeling even amongst some legislators that venereal diseases have become only a minor problem) "even in those countries in which the incidence of venereal diseases has been reduced to a very low level these diseases still represent a potential danger. Existing foci of such diseases may easily flare up when social conditions are disturbed or during war time, or when other factors favouring promiscuity are present. The speed of international traffic may also be considered a factor in the propagation of the disease. Thus certain of the preventive measures for which provision is made in venereal disease legislation, as well as measures aimed at preventing congenital syphilis, should not be abandoned without careful consideration".

In this connexion the author quotes the joint declaration of three important organizations in the U.S.A., *i.e.* The American Venereal Disease Association, The Association of State and Territorial Health Officers, and the American Social Hygiene Association, made in February, 1954, that "despite great strides in venereal disease control, complete control is not imminent".

The countries whose laws have been surveyed in the present publication are listed, with the dates of their legislative measures. In these it is interesting to see that, against 35 of the nations mentioned, the earliest date cited is 1940 or later. It would have been worth mentioning in the present survey that pioneers in the prevention of the spread of venereal disease by free treatment of the infected were Denmark, 1778, and Sweden, 1817.

It would be impossible here to mention in any detail the information given in this work, and it must suffice to show its scope by mentioning the heads under which the subject is treated: venereal diseases covered by different laws; notification of patients, defaulters, and sources of infection; examinations required by law of sources of infection, suspects, contacts, groups of the population, those about to marry, and pregnant women; compulsory treatment and hospitalization; duties of medical practitioners in respect of venereal diseases; law in regard to infecting or exposing others to infection; advertisement of remedies and quack treatment; occupations in which sufferers from certain venereal diseases may not engage (in an appendix are given particulars of such prohibitions in six countries or states); care of children suffering from venereal disease; organization of venereal disease control.

When one thinks of the fuss made in some quarters over the relatively mild Regulation 33B in Great Britain, one cannot but be amazed at the regimentation some peoples will tolerate.

L. W. H.

## SYMPOSIUM ON TRICHOMONAL INFECTIONS

A Symposium on Trichomonal Infections organized by the French Society of Gynaecology will be held at Reimes, France, on May 28-30, 1957. It is hoped to have the collaboration of gynaecologists, urologists, venereologists gastroenterologists, parasitologists and veterinary surgeons.

Further particulars may be obtained from Dr. E. G. Chappaz, Ecole Nationale de Médecine et de Pharmacie, Reimes, Marne, France.